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PQ Ref 40733/20

To ask the Minister for Health the number of deaths by suicide to date in 2020; the number in each year since 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) has been requested to respond to your question above.

Background

In Ireland, the decision as to whether someone has died by suicide is a *legal* determination made by Coroners, *not* a medical decision by doctors or the HSE.

Death due to intentional self-harm is classified as an unnatural death and therefore, must be referred to the Coroner for investigation. This investigation can take a protracted length of time to complete for various reasons (such as getting medical reports, health and safety reports, engineer's report, the involvement of the Director of Public Prosecutions etc.) and this delays the registration of such deaths.

Thereafter, data is published by the Central Statistics Office. You are welcome to contact the CSO (which is an independent Office) directly with additional queries.

Data from the CSO is delivered in three stages (and is all publicly available on www.cso.ie);

1. Provided firstly by year of registration – “provisional”
2. Revised later, by year of occurrence – “official”
3. Revised later again, to include “late registrations”.

2020 Data

At present provisional data is available from the CSO, for Q1 and Q2 2020.

- Q1_2020 (72 deaths due to intentional self-harm)
 - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-vs/vitalstatisticsfirstquarter2020/>
- Q2_2020 (25 deaths due to intentional self-harm)
 - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-vs/vitalstatisticssecondquarter2020/>

Note the CSO have given the following caveat to Q2 information: “*The number of deaths registered in Quarter 2 2020 that were assigned an Underlying Cause of Death of intentional self-harm was 25, this is less than a quarter (24.0%) of the number assigned the same Underlying Cause of Death code of intentional self-harm in the same quarter of 2019. All unnatural deaths, which includes deaths from intentional self-harm must be referred to the Coroner's Office. However, the Coroner's Court did not hold public hearings as a consequence of the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and this would impact on the number of deaths registered and subsequently assigned an Underlying Cause of Death of intentional self-harm.*”

Data since 2016

You are welcome to view our briefing document on annual CSO data which is always available and kept up-to-date here: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/publications/nosp-briefing-on-suicide-figures.html>.

For convenience, the headline information is as follows;

Year	Number of suicide deaths	Male	Female	Type of data (as at December 2020)
2019	421	317	104	Provisional, year of registration data
2018	437	327	110	Official, year of occurrence data, <i>excluding</i> late registrations
2017	383	310	73	Official, year of occurrence data, <i>excluding</i> late registrations
2016	516	417	99	Official, year of occurrence data, <i>including</i> late registrations

I trust this information is useful for you. Please do revert should you require anything further.

Yours sincerely,



Mr John Meehan

HSE Assistant National Director, Mental Health Strategy and Planning

Head of National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)